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ABSTRACT

A project aimed to use United Kingdom full-time undergraduate student work experience as the vehicle for development of the students' skills to improve their subsequent employability upon graduation. It took an employer-led approach to develop a model transferable to other employers and higher education (HE) institutions. Arrangements were made for employer staff to mentor students at work. Challenges and issues during implementation were employer recruitment cycles at odds with students' availability to work; students' belief that structured work experience was not valuable for them; students' motivation to earn, not acquire, skills; and inability to embed work-based learning in curricula. Project outputs included a range of learning materials for both students and mentors in the workplace, a series of reports, and dissemination and publicity materials. The model was easily transferable to other institutions and situations. Key achievements were the branding of skills development at Leeds Metropolitan University; creating a student "client culture"; developing dissemination networks and systems; identifying the right time to raise skills development issues with students; and development of a new form of recognition for part-time work experience. (Appendixes include participant lists; sample forms; analysis of student registrations; tips for work experience initiatives; and descriptions of eight projects in the work experience theme.) (YLB)

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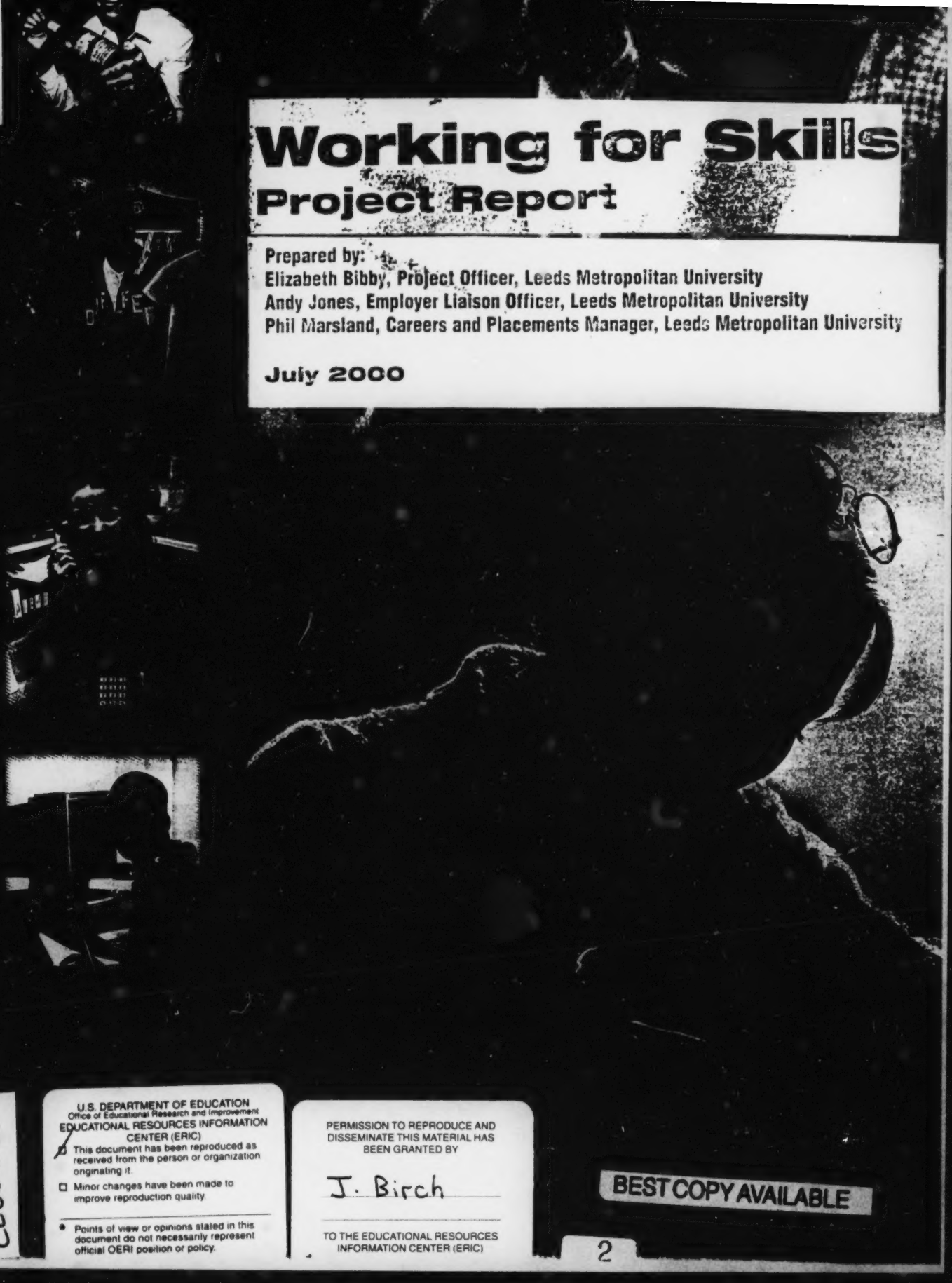

Working for Skills
Project Report

Prepared by:
Elizabeth Bibby, Project Officer, Leeds Metropolitan University
Andy Jones, Employer Liaison Officer, Leeds Metropolitan University
Phil Marsland, Careers and Placements Manager, Leeds Metropolitan University

July 2000

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Executive summary

Background

Working for Skills is one of nine projects funded under the DfEE, Higher Education Quality and Employability division (HEQE) development theme of "Work Experience" in 1998 - 2000.

Aims

The project aimed to use the vehicle of full-time undergraduates' part-time employment to:

develop and deliver a model of work experience which would be capable of providing large scale workplace learning opportunities to higher education students;

transfer the model to other HE institutions and employers; and

make the model available to all higher education students learning in Leeds.

Success and achievements

The project has had notable successes in the areas of:

Successful establishment of the WfS brand through dissemination, locally and nationally.

Raising employer awareness of the potential of students as a source of high calibre recruits for part-time vacancies.

Supplying high quality recruits to the Hotel and Catering sector, noted for its difficulty in recruiting to part-time jobs. Increasing placement opportunities for LMU sandwich students; and linking hospitality organisations to DfEE theme projects in other regions.

Building student commitment to the development of their employability and to their relationship with the project.

Networking, locally, regionally and nationally.

National press coverage for Working for Skills and general employability issues.

Complementing the work of the LMU Job Shop and re-positioning it within LMU.

Accreditation frameworks to support a variety of individual needs.

Catalysing change.

Impact

Working for Skills has catalysed structural and cultural change within LMU. We have effectively increased the interest levels of both students and academic staff in employability skills issues. These quotes are typical of the comments we received from LMU lecturing staff when we asked them for feedback at our dissemination conference:

> *"Employability skills are important for EVERYONE."*

> *"[I have] increased confidence in what we are already doing in [Faculty] to develop employability skills in our students and renewed enthusiasm and determination to create more links with local corporates and SMEs."*

> *"Non-vocational work experience accreditation and assessment is possible."*

The project has also been highly effective in raising awareness of the LMU Job Shop and its facilities and increased the use of the service.

Regionally, we have had success in raising awareness among employers of the potential of students as a source of quality part-time labour and have raised active interest in over 20 individual organisations. Students have been placed with at least nine companies and a range of independent café bars. In the Hotel and Catering sector particularly, we have been able to supply high calibre individuals to a sector with noted recruitment difficulties [see Leeds TEC Annual Employer Survey 1998]. Through the mediation of the Leeds TEC Ltd, we have been working with individual hotels to place students into part-time work during the early summer, in order to provide a pool of trained workers in readiness for the busy Christmas period.

Nationally, we have impacted upon the consciousness of many HEIs and disseminated materials and information on request to 30 individual HEIs and FEIs. At least six institutions are planning to incorporate some elements of Working for Skills into their own initiatives. Working for Skills has become a nationally recognised brand within the Higher Education community.

Alongside these events Working for Skills has been instrumental in facilitating change in methods of working within the LMU Job Shop. At the same time, structural changes have enabled the convergence of the Career Development Service and the Job Shop under the control of the Office for Leeds and Yorkshire (OLAY). This new unit has an outward focus, concentrating on engaging regional business and industry with the University. Continuation plans are in place to embed Working for Skills in the LMU Job Shop that, given the placing in OLAY, will ensure successful continuation and growth for employability skills development within a coherent approach and structural framework.

Products

Five **student learning resources** have been published and to support students' use of the learning resources in their workplace we developed two **resources for mentors.** All learning resources are available for download (as Adobe Acrobat™ .pdf files) from the Working for Skills web site at http://www.lmu.ac.uk.acr/wfs/site/resources.htm.

Working for Skills has a range of other paper products, including newsletters, a report on accreditation options; a report on student part-time working patterns; and reports on student evaluation of the learning resources.

A selection of electronic resources is also available, including a web site and a web-based conferencing system.

Process

The project took an employer-led focus from the outset. Employers were involved in the outlining of the project bid and partnerships were established with six large national recruiters of graduates who are active in the Yorkshire region. These six companies agreed to work with Working for Skills in developing learning resources and in providing large-scale, mentored, part-time work opportunities for undergraduates.

We surveyed our partners needs, and the skill development opportunities that they could offer to students, and established agreements on mentoring structures. We also developed a partnership statement, outlining the benefits and responsibilities of the partnership. All the employer partners were represented on an Employer Consultative Group and an employer representative chaired our Steering Committee.

The Leeds Business School developed three learning resources. Two resources were targeted at students, one to prepare them for part-time work experience and the second to support their employability skills development while in employment. We piloted the main resource, the "*Identifying the GAP*" student workfile with a group of students and obtained feedback which encouraged us to redevelop that resource into a set of four, smaller, booklets. We also acted on our students' advice and adapted the style of presentation to one that they felt more at ease with. The third resource was developed to aid mentors in the work place. This was later re-developed into two units, one of which specifically supports mentors in assisting students in working through their Working for Skills workfile.

The School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at LMU developed an accreditation framework for us. They delivered a 45 point Level 1 added -value qualification, the *Vocational Certificate in Professional and Personal Skills*, and a set of work-based learning module skeletons. The module skeletons were designed to allow any programme area to develop the module to suit their local needs. The School also researched available external models of accreditation and made recommendations on suitability.

Working for Skills provided a quality job matching service by working closely with the LMU Job Shop to identify registered students who most closely matched the needs of the employing organisation. We then assisted suitable students in making their applications and offered them the student learning resources to develop employability skills in the workplace.

Findings

Leeds continues to develop a thriving and vibrant economy. Most of the growth in vacancies is in the service sector, with emphasis on part-time employment [SOURCE: Leeds TEC Employer Survey 1998]. This type of work remains attractive to students and future prospects for personal skills development work with part-time employment look good.

Relying on an employer-led strategy has produced mixed outcomes. Changing focus to a broader-based and opportunity-led strategy gave us greater flexibility and control and allowed us to deliver more opportunities to students. This change of focus demanded more of project staff to deliver individual support. The resulting tailored approach was greatly appreciated by our student clients and seems to have improved individual motivation.

Our learning resources have had a mixed reception. "*Strategies for part-time work*" has proved invaluable in our tailored approach to students. Book 4 of the workfile "*Identifying the GAP*" has been similarly useful in preparing students for their next steps. But the main part of the student workfile places too great a load on busy students and needs extensive redevelopment to present the work differently and to rationalise the set of skills presented for development. Students have been quick to recognise the value of the resource and would welcome it in a less daunting format but simply feel unable to tackle it as it stands.

For significant success in this area there is a need to embed accreditation within the student's degree programme. Students who are studying full-time and working extended part-time hours have few resources available to take on the workload of an additional qualification. There are implications here for delivery of skills development programmes and a need to investigate highly flexible methods of delivery to students whose free time is likely to fall outside of normal office hours.

One very important finding is that both students and employers are shy of the term **"Work Experience"**. The label of Work Experience has been much used and has been applied to a variety of situational types. There is an urgent need to investigate a more relevant and attractive label for skills development work.

Conclusions and recommendations

The core concept of Working for Skills has enormous potential. In the absence of large-scale work placement opportunities, student part-time employment must be regarded as the best source of exposure to the working environment and the development of employability skills. The idea of a mutually beneficial partnership with employers works but it is essential that many employers are engaged in order to ensure a steady flow and variety of vacancies. Student employment services can help to increase this engagement by taking an opportunistic and pro-active approach to vacancy seeking.

Much of our learning has been related to the ways in which HEIs work together with the business community, and with students as individuals. We present here our major conclusions. Recommendations are contained within the body of the report and an appendix lists our tips for successful working

We have established that there is a high demand for student employment in Leeds. The service sector economy is booming and part-time jobs proliferate. Student employment services can play an important brokerage role between the student and the employer and promote the idea of learning while earning to their student clients.

Student employment in the service sector has the potential to provide a high-quality learning experience. Service sector employers partners are committed to learning and development in their part-time staff and typical training programmes are extensive; including personal skills development.

HEIs need to be pro-active & flexible when working with the local business community. Employability skills initiatives will benefit from being opportunity led rather than business led. There are challenges to be met in gearing service sector recruitment and academic year cycles together. Our conclusion is that employers need to plan well ahead and manage the process of recruiting from the student population. Student employment services can assist the employer by making a pro-active approach in advance of peak recruitment times.

Students will respond positively to the accreditation of work experience if it is embedded in the curriculum. Extra-curricular study is unlikely to attract in the same way. Any form of recognition that is not embedded in the degree needs to impose significantly fewer loads on the individual than formal accreditation.

The importance of developing employability skills needs to be promoted to students at a very early stage. Contacting prospective students at the pre-entry stage seems to us to be the most productive aspect of promotion. Parental and teacher support can also be gained at this stage.

Skills development work needs a new identity if it is to succeed. Work Experience is a term that has been over-used and that, for many people, has particular connotations. Both employers and students have indicated to us that the term "Work Experience" has an inhibiting effect for them.

Generally, we believe that there is a problem of individual students not understanding that personal skills development is a lifelong process and applies directly to them. They appreciate its value but feel it more suited to other people, and in many cases have a belief that one exposure to these ideas is sufficient. We suspect that many young undergraduate students may lack the maturity to be effective reflectors.

When students' attention can be gained, it needs to be held. Learning materials must be tightly written and cohesive and, like accreditation, impose the minimum necessary load to provide successful development. A client-oriented, one to one approach to the students appears to pay dividends.

Finally, it must be understood that the student body is not homogenous. Increasing numbers of students do not fit the 18/19-year-old A-level entry pattern. And there are a variety of course types ranging from the highly vocational and professionally proscribed course to the entirely non-vocational humanities type course. Many students on courses across the spectrum will come to the university with a degree of work experience of some kind. We conclude that no single employability skills programme or approach could serve the needs of any university's total student body.

Overall, we believe that Working for Skills is extensible and can be applied to a wider set of situations than the undergraduate part-time worker. It may, in fact, be more applicable to recent graduates, particularly those who consider themselves to be under-employed. We also hope that Working for Skills may be used for Level 1 students in preparation for placement.

Background to the project

- ***LMU mission***
- ***Applied learning***
- ***Buoyant local economy***
- ***Strong service sector***
- ***Availability of part-time employment***
- ***Student debt***
- ***Changing first destinations***
- ***SMEs difficulty in recruiting right people***
- ***Dearing calls for more work experience opportunities***
- ***Strong employer involvement***

Background

01. Leeds Metropolitan University is a University of Applied Learning and its Mission includes the core strategic aims to:

- be a University of Applied Learning focusing on developing intellectual, personal and employability skills.
- offer those who study at the University a quality experience, and a marketable outcome.
- contribute to, and benefit from, the City and the Region's economic and social development.

Also:

> *"The University believes that the external environment over the next five years, not least the recommendations in the Dearing Report, require it to play to its strengths and to reinforce rather than change its position within higher education."*

[SOURCE: LMU Corporate Plan 1999-2003]

02. The city has a buoyant economy. Service sector and leisure organisations are prospering. Often they find it difficult to recruit sufficient part-time staff of the right calibre.

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03. At the same time, we find that, increasingly, full-time students are discovering that they need to earn while they study. Due to the pattern of their studies they are available at times when many service sector industries require labour. Students have qualities that may advantage them in the part-time jobs market.

04. A further factor is that first destinations for Graduates are changing. No longer are the large, "blue chip" companies absorbing the majority of new Graduates. Instead, the majority of university leavers are finding work in SMEs. Despite the growth in the percentage of Graduates finding employment in SMEs Graduate unemployment/underemployment is growing. At the same time, a growing number of SMEs fail to recruit because they cannot find the right kind of graduate. University leavers often lack the key transferable skills that are required in the workplace. They are unable to provide evidence that they can "hit the ground running".

05. Against this background, the **Dearing Report** called for all undergraduate students to receive some form of work experience to help to counter these difficulties:

Recommendation 18:

"We recommend that all institutions should, over the medium term, identify opportunities to increase the extent to which programmes help students to become familiar with work, and help them to reflect on such experience."

Recommendation 19:

"We recommend that the Government, with immediate effect, works with representative employer and professional organisations to encourage employers to offer more work experience opportunities for students."

[SOURCE: "Higher Education in the Learning Society",
National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education]

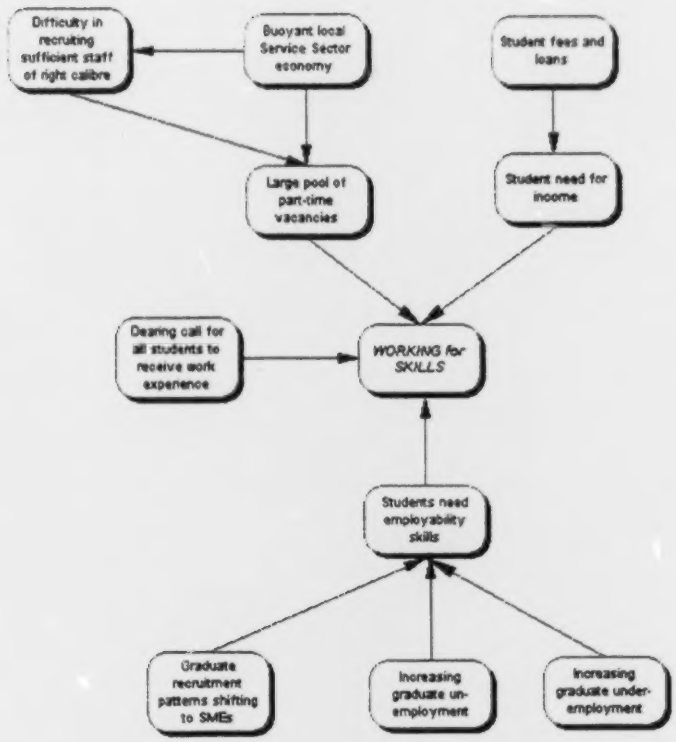
Difficulty in recruiting sufficient staff of right calibre
Buoyant local Service Sector economy
Student fees and loans
Large pool of part-time vacancies
Student need for income
Dearing call for all students to receive work experience
WORKING for SKILLS
Students need employability skills
Graduate recruitment patterns shifting to SMEs
Increasing graduate un-employment
Increasing graduate under-employment

Figure 1 : Working for Skills; designed to meet several needs.

06. Within this context, the Working for Skills Project developed out of a desire within the university to respond to those aspects of the Dearing Report which recommended that the higher education and employment sectors should work together to provide students with work experience. The opportunity arose through the 1997 DfEE Higher Education and Employment Prospectus to propose a project based around the idea that student part time employment could provide the source of large-scale work experience opportunities.

07. Working for Skills is just one of Leeds Metropolitan University's responses to the call. A strong, employer-led focus was planned in order to best meet the perceived needs of recruiters of both part-time and Graduate staff.

08. The proposal suggested that a partnership between the university and a number of large local employers could explore the feasibility of using part time employment to help students to recognise and to develop their transferable skills and become more employable and competitive graduates.

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Summary:

09. A strong background in applied learning at LMU, together with the call from Dearing and the Government response to it (by establishing this round of projects) set the scene for Working for Skills. The logic behind our approach arose from a set of perceived needs:

1 Employers, SMEs in particular, need recruits with work experience and key transferable skills.

2 New graduates need a competitive edge when applying for work. That edge can be provided by developing the transferable skills needed by employers.

3 Undergraduates need additional income, which they find from part-time and vacation employment. That employment provides valuable work experience.

10. The project sought to answer these needs by using this student work experience as the vehicle for the development of students' skills to improve their subsequent employability upon graduation.

Project definition

- ***Using students' part-time employment***
- ***Objectives and targets***
- ***Employer-led***
- ***Employer partnerships***
- ***Local employers with National operations***
- ***Transferable model***

Aims

11. The project aimed to use the vehicle of full-time undergraduates' part-time employment to:

- develop and deliver a model of work experience which would be capable of providing large scale workplace learning opportunities to higher education students;
- transfer the model to other HE institutions and employers; and
- make the model available to all higher education students learning in Leeds.

Objectives and targets

12. The project objectives were to establish learning materials and processes that would lead to the recognition of skills developed by student participants and by their workplace peers and supervisors. Students would be prepared for their work experience and mentoring arrangements put into place within the workplace. The development of mentors would also be supported and accreditation of mentoring skills offered.

13. Our contracted targets were to:

- provide a tailored employment service;
- establish a single point of access for employers requiring contact with LMU;
- develop three open learning resources, one to prepare students for the workplace, one for students at work, and another for mentors in the workplace;
- develop a minimum of three forms of certification, of which
- one form of accreditation to be an external, transferable model;
- to enable a minimum of 250 students to have "valuable guided learning experience", and
- to accredit a minimum of 100 of those students for their work experience;
- to accredit a minimum of 25 employer staff;
- to enable a minimum of four universities to benefit from the project;
- to enable a minimum of 14 employer organisations to benefit from the project;
- to hold a regional dissemination event;
- to develop a web site; and
- to develop a web-based conferencing facility.

Partners

14. Our initial partners in the Working for Skills project included those from Leeds Metropolitan University; The University of Leeds; The Leeds TEC Limited; and our employer partners as follows:

- ASDA Stores Ltd
- Allied Domecq Retailing Ltd
- Bass Leisure Retail Ltd
- Halifax Direct
- Marks and Spencer (Pudsey)
- Ventura

15. Employer partners were chosen as representative of organisations employing both part-time staff and graduates at local, regional, and national levels of operation. Their organisations are also representative of those in which students typically choose to work; licensed premises, retail outlets, and call centres.

16. Our partners within Leeds Metropolitan University were The Leeds Business School, contracted to develop the learning materials and The School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, contracted to research, review, develop, and recommend accreditation schemes.

17. And our funding partners were:

- The DfEE
- The Leeds TEC Ltd
- Leeds Metropolitan University

The role of employer partners

18. Working for Skills is distinctive in that it was developed as an employer-led project. Employer partners were involved from the pre-contract stage and were consulted during the project definition phase. All participation by employer organisations in the Working for Skills project was undertaken on a partnership basis. An employer representative chaired the Steering Committee and an Employer Consultative Group (ECG) was established. The ECG acted as a forum for close liaison with our employer partners and all partners were represented.

19. We drew up a brief document outlining the benefits we believed participating employers would receive from taking part in the project:

- The provision of a recruitment agency service at no extra cost.
- Development of a local pool of flexible skilled labour.
- Focused and motivated part-time or vacation staff.
- Participation in the development of learning materials that meet business needs.
- Learning is business and employer led.
- Opportunity to apply project learning resources and learning techniques to staff development
- Availability of University training and accreditation for permanent staff which could be credited toward degree level study
- Opportunity to assess the capabilities and suitability of future full time graduate or non graduate recruits.
- Opportunities to develop supervisory staff.
- National publicity associated with a leading edge high profile government funded project.

20. We also defined the responsibilities of the employer partners and outlined some of the important aspects of the nature of the relationship:

- no fees should be involved in either direction;
- at no time would employer partners be required or expected to create vacancies artificially;
- the Working for Skills Project would attempt to match undergraduate students seeking part-time employment to vacancies supplied by employer organisations through the agency of the Leeds Metropolitan University Job Shop; and
- normal recruitment and selection processes would not be affected by providing a further source of potential recruits from the Working for Skills project.

21. For more detail of the agreement, see the Appendix: 4 Employer Partner Involvement.

Summary

22. Working for Skills took an employer-led approach to develop a model of work experience for full-time undergraduates who are working part-time through their studies. Initial partners were large graduate employers with local operations but also having national activities. The model was developed as transferable to other employers and Higher Education Institutions. Arrangements were made for employer staff to mentor students at work. A statement of the roles of partners and the benefits to business was drawn up.

Implementation and development

- ***Project start up***
- ***Steering Committee and Employer Consultative Group***
- ***Evaluation consultant***
- ***Resource Development Team***
- ***Phased strategy***
- ***Recruitment cycles v the Academic Year***
- ***Timing of training schemes***
- ***Stability of student employment***
- ***Previous engagement with "work experience"***
- ***Catching students interest early***
- ***Progression of employment type***
- ***Working for Skills as a source of high-quality employment***
- ***Embedded accreditation***
- ***Shifting focus***
- ***Learning materials***
- ***Employer certificate***
- ***Staff retention and recruitment***
- ***Relocation of premises.***

Inputs and resources

23. Prior to the project start date; we established a steering committee. The membership comprised representatives of project staff, universities, businesses, business intermediaries, LMU Students' Union, development agencies, etc. A business representative chaired the committee. For the full membership of the committee see the Appendix, 2 Steering Committee members. The committee met three times a year. We divided business between the formal reporting of progress, and issues arising, and a more pro-active approach to seeking support and advice from individual members. To encourage attendance we set meetings for a mid-morning start, finishing with a working lunch.

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24. The project team was made up of a Project Manager (0.3 fte), a Project Officer, an Employer Liaison Officer, and an Administrative Assistant. The writing of the learning resources was contracted out to the Leeds Business School. The researching and development of accreditation frameworks was contracted out to the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, LMU.

25. We set up an Employer Consultative Group with representation from all our employer partners. This was an informal, but active and practical, forum in which we intended to use employers' time effectively. The group met more frequently than the Steering Committee (4 times a year) but meetings were timed to allow outputs to feed into Steering Committee meetings wherever possible. The business of the meetings included progress reporting; discussion of issues and possible responses and solutions; and the review of learning materials and processes.

26. Additional employer inputs came in the form of both planned and exceptional meetings (in the workplace).

27. We appointed an external evaluation consultant, Dr Peter Hawkins. Together with Dr Hawkins we drew up a set of evaluation criteria. We held periodic review meetings at which we examined performance against the criteria and formal reporting was based on these review meetings. We were keen, however, to make more practical use of our consultant and maintained contact throughout the project lifecycle in order to take an evolutionary approach to project management. It was a periodic review of progress on learning materials and accreditation that led to Dr Hawkins' suggestion of establishing Resource Development Team meetings and he kindly chaired these meetings for us. The Resource Development Team was made up of project staff and representatives from The Leeds Business School and the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Project Planning

28. This two-year project was divided into six phases. Planned for the first phase to run from April 1998 to August 1998, the project had a delayed start and contracts were not signed until mid-May. Recruitment was delayed, and the project officer commenced employment on 01 August 1998.

29. The project plan was driven in part by the shape of the academic year. We therefore took the decision not to move all the phases on by four months but to aim to meet the original milestones wherever possible. The Project manager originated some of the processes in the period between April and the start of the project in August 1998 (preliminary phase).

30. The preliminary phase included project set up activities:

- Establishment of facilities
- Appointment of project staff
- Commissioning of sub-contractors for development of accreditation schemes and learning materials
- Commissioning of the external evaluation consultant
- Establishment of the Steering Committee
- Establishment of budget and monitoring system

31. Phase one was planned to run from August to September 1998 and concentrated on planning and early development activities:

- Development of evaluation strategy
- Development and agreement of draft Strategic Plan
- Research into good practice in Work Based Learning
- Development of learning materials
- Establishment of Employer Consultative Group
- Establishment of networks
- Establishment of web pages

32. This phase also included the establishment of operational relationships with employer partners and research into their needs and skill development opportunities. We used a proforma (see Appendix 5 Employer visits for details) to ensure that all relevant questions were put to each organisation. The questions also covered day to day project organisation. Our visits identified some issues that impacted on our plans and objectives (see Issues, learning, and responses). The findings on recruitment patterns are also summarised in Appendix 6 Summary of early discussions regarding employment possibilities).

33. Phase Two was planned from October 1998 until the end of 1998. This phase was largely concerned with consolidation:

- Partnership agreements on learning structures and outcomes
- Partnership agreements on promotional, referral, selection and student preparatory arrangements with each employer.
- Commencement of development of accreditation strategies

34. This phase was also concerned with facilitating recruitment of LMU students to employers. We hoped to use the LMU Job Shop to assist employers to recruit a minimum of eight students a month.

35. Phase three was planned from January 1999 to July 1999 and was concerned mainly with implementation:

- LBS piloting of draft learning materials
- Recruitment and selection of Employer Liaison Officer
- LBS and project office evaluation of learning materials with end users
- Convening of internal Work Based Learning Network
- Initial training of employer staff
- Preparation of student publicity materials
- Formal recruitment of students to pilot programme
- Introduction of learning materials and implementation of induction arrangements
- Publish first newsletter

36. The fourth phase of the project planned to embrace evaluation of the first 12 months, extension of the project, and organisational change:

- Evaluation of first year, amendment of strategic and budget plans
- Evaluation of local work based learning practices
- Establish and publicise employer gateway
- Evaluation of learning resources and support mechanisms with first student completers
- Establish and publicise virtual work experience conference
- Evaluate accreditation schemes within scope of project
- Implement extension strategy to local SMEs. Other employers and HE institutions

37. Phase five, planned from December 1999 to February 2000 was concerned mainly with dissemination:

- Host dissemination seminar
- Circulate second newsletter
- Prepare final report

38. The final phase of the project from March 2000 concerned itself with reporting, dissemination, evaluation and continuation:

- Evaluate work experience model and associated strategies
- Report to DfEE
- Develop and recommend continuation strategy
- Prepare and disseminate final report
- Implement continuation strategy
- Close project

39. We adapted activities as necessary in the light of the late start. Most affected were the recruitment of students and the resultant loss of the summer vacation recruiting period in 1998.

40. There were problems associated with the learning materials and their late delivery. An extensive re-write affected project plans for piloting the materials. Wherever possible we kept to the original phase plans but we did suffer slippage in some areas of the project plan.

Issues, learning, and responses

Recruitment cycles

41. Our first round of visits to employer partners identified our first challenge. Each employer partner had a recruitment cycle at odds with our students' availability to work. The retail sector, for instance, has a quiet period from the New Year through to the Easter period when recruitment begins again. But at this time students tend to get their heads down in preparation for Semester 2 assessments. Licensed retail outlets also experience a drop in trade from after New Year until the warmer weather begins around Easter.

42. These organisations are seeking to recruit staff from Easter and especially for the busy summer period to cover an upturn in sales and for full-time and permanent staff holidays. Students have a habit of disappearing home as soon as Semester 2 assessments have been completed. They return in October, flooding the licensed outlets with their initial buying power. Pubs and bars seek to recruit staff in time to train them before the student body arrives in the city; but the pool of potential staff has not yet arrived in Leeds.

43. We anticipated that the call centre organisations would help to plug the gap but found that they too have a recruitment cycle that supports the annual leave round of their permanent staff. More significantly, the timing of their training schemes became an issue.

44. Call centres find it more efficient to train part-time staff on a full-time basis for a short period. The vacation period is ideal for this purpose but many students have left Leeds at the time that call centres are ready to recruit and train.

45. Students are most actively seeking work after Christmas at a time when retail sales and licensed sales both slump. Over the Christmas and New Year period there is an ample supply of bar work available but licensees will not recruit part-time staff who are unable or unwilling to commit to working the holiday shifts. Individual students may intend to stay in Leeds for the bulk of the vacation period but they commonly return home for Christmas itself.

46. Some of the employer organisations use a job swap scheme to avoid some of the difficulties associated with students "disappearing" home at vacation time. Good student employees may be able to exchange jobs for vacation periods with students returning to Leeds from universities elsewhere in the country.

Existing work

47. Our initial response was to assume that locally based students would take up the slack as 30% of LMU full-time undergraduate intake is supplied from the Yorkshire and Humberside region [SOURCE: LMU Corporate Plan, 1999-2003, section 1:10].

48. Later research, in the form of our Student part-time working survey 1999 (see the appendix of the same name) demonstrated that this local group of students is largely lost to us. The survey showed that many of our students are still working in the same job they have held since coming to University. Some retain the same job they were working at while still at school.

Employer loyalty

49. This loyalty to the employer was a surprise finding of the survey. Over half the students returning the questionnaire were already in part-time work. We surveyed level 2 students and a number of them had been in the same job for between four and six years. Most of the students expected to stay with their employer from periods of six months to several years.

Previous "work experience"

50. Many students also told us that they had *"done work experience and reflective learning at school"*. Some of them gave the impression that the whole arena was outmoded as far as they were concerned. They believe structured work experience to be valuable "for other students". But not for themselves.

Readiness for reflection and lifelong learning

51. Evidently our intended audience of level 2 students was not going to supply us with our target figure of 250 registered students. More importantly, we identified the issue that such students are not recognising their own need for lifelong learning and development.

Early promotion

52. Our response to the numbers problem was to target pre-entry and new students. In the summer of 1999 we sent out 10,500 promotional leaflets in "freshers" joining instructions. We hoped that this would attract the interest of parents as well as seizing the new students before they found other part-time work. Engaging the students early was a successful strategy and we now believe that parents play an important part in pointing out the benefits of employability skills development.

53. Project staff also gave presentations to first year groups at the beginning of session. The result of these strategies was a peak of over 400 new registrations at the beginning of Semester 1 in 1999.

Preferred employment

54. We now had students signed up to the project but had another learning point to face. Students want to work. Or, more accurately, **they desire a source of income**. Some students are motivated by the need to acquire skills (see analysis in the appendix, *Analysis of Student Registrations*) but the majority is increasingly motivated to find the greatest source of income for least investment of time. We have identified a progression of ambition that appears to relate to both debt and study loads, represented here in Figure 2.

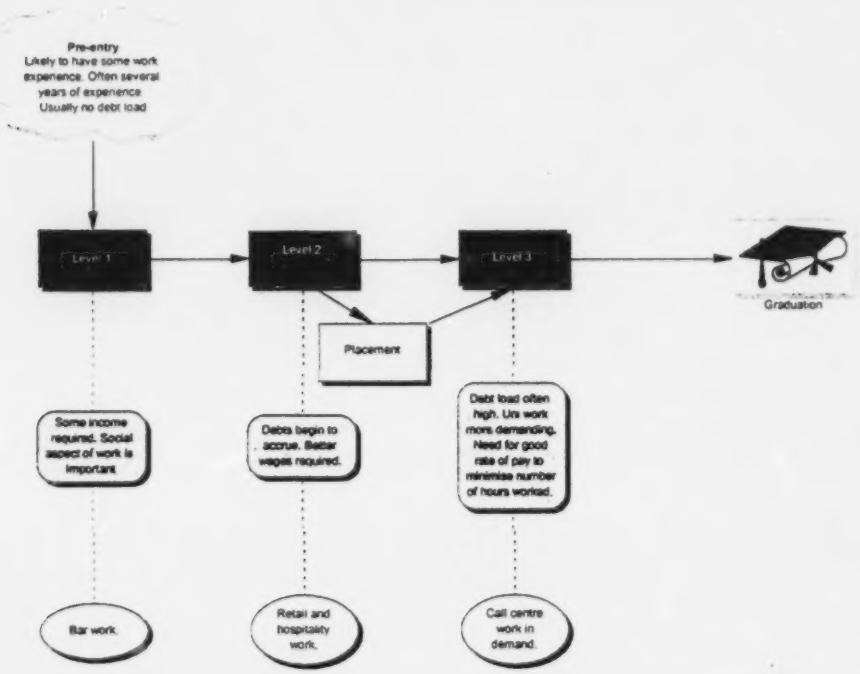
Pre-entry
Likely to have some work experience. Often several years of experience.
Usually no debt load
Level 1
Level 2
Level 3
Graduation
Placement
Some income required. Social aspect of work is important.
Debts begin to accrue. Better wages required.
Debt load often high. Uni work more demanding. Need for good rate of pay to minimise number of hours worked.
Bar work.
Retail and hospitality work.
Call centre work in demand.

Figure 2 Student progression through PT service sector employment

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55. New students generally appreciate bar work; as they carry no initial debt load their need for money tends to be less acute and bar work offers plenty of social contact. Call centre work is highly valued in the later years of study because the excellent rates of pay on offer allow students to exchange fewer study hours for pay. Not all call centre work is appropriate if this is the driver however. Rapidly changing products can lead call centres to demand a "minimum hours" contract of as much as 20 hours per week in order to keep the worker's product knowledge up to date.

Progression of experience

56. In some senses we believe that the highest paid work may not offer the best experience in employability skills development. Happily, the progressive pursuit of increasingly better paid employment supports the progressive development of employment skills. Initially working in bars, the student develops team, customer care and social skills (among others). Later, moving on to work in retail outlets they refine these and may develop some administrative skills. The later move to call centre work prepares the student for the type of job they may well undertake on graduation. Up to 50% of new graduates are now going into clerical employment, many of these into call centre work. [SOURCE: Moving on Survey]

Students value high quality employment

57. Students then, value Working for Skills as a source of high quality employment. Few of our registered students are interested in taking on degree level study, **plus** part-time work, **plus** formal development **and** accreditation of work experience and transferable skills. This is most likely the effect of our need to target level 1 students. It is understandable that any individual student will need to carefully assess their ability to carry their studies and a job before taking on an additional workload. Those students we have surveyed on this matter are not disinterested in accreditation of work experience but they do want it embedded within their degree.

Job matching

58. We took a pragmatic view to the issue; it is the work experience itself that is most important. It offers the opportunity for skills development whether formally addressed or not (and most of our employer partners have excellent in-house development schemes). We concentrated on finding suitable vacancies and matching students to them.

59. Formal development, we decided, is better aimed at students who have been at work for a longer period. In-house training schemes can extend over periods of months rather than days. We felt that students would rather take on the additional load after maybe six to 12 months in post. We approached our employer organisations to suggest that the workfile could be aimed not at new recruits but at students already employed within their organisations.

Operational difficulties

60. We then encountered our next "employer" issue. Some organisations are not able to identify part-time employees who are students. Others can identify student status but not by institution. Where e-mail contact was possible students were sent e-mail inviting them to participate in the project. In other organisations we advertised on internal noticeboards or asked managers to circulate information generally.

Non-accredited recognition

61. Accreditation was not proving to be an incentive for the majority of students and few were willing to tackle the workfile for its intrinsic benefit. We discussed the issues and emerging patterns with the employer partners and came to the conclusion that a different "carrot" was needed. Perhaps some form of recognition that was not formal accreditation and did not involve the student in much more work than that built into the workfile itself.

62. We responded by developing the non-accredited employer recognition award, the *Working for Skills Certificate of Completion* and promoted it within the employer organisations through the routes we were using to promote Working for Skills learning materials.

The demands of course work

63. One other factor affected student registrations to the project. LMU offers a range of professional and vocational courses. We discovered that some of these courses (e.g. in the Health professions) have a curriculum defined by the professional body. In these cases, the curriculum may not allow for the embedding of additional modules such as the WBL module. These courses also require some professional practise and students have advised us that the demands of course work and placements do not allow for them to take on Working for Skills, much as they recognise its value and might want to.

64. We have not found a response to this last difficulty, although at least one School and one Faculty are investigating project resources with a view to embedding them into a redevelopment of their existing personal development modules.

Changing circumstances

65. There were other challenges, which centred on the employers. In general, delivery of vacancies proved to be a problem. Not due to any dishonesty on the part of partners; as clearly, at the time we interviewed them, they believed in their ability to deliver vacancies in large numbers. At the commencement of the project there were no worries about reaching targets and we expected to exceed them by a wide margin. Initial problems were of timing (previously discussed) As the project progressed however, major changes were occurring in their business environment. All of the employer partners were experiencing periods of change and uncertainty that in some cases affected recruitment.

Type of change	Organisation(s) affected	Effects
Acquisition and merger	ASDA (by Wal-Mart)	---
	ADR (by Punch (BASS TR))	Generally, a "battening down" by local managers.
Economic downturn	Marks and Spencer	Initially, a hold on recruitment
Economic growth	Ventura	Reduction in vacancies available locally
- Relocation subsidies	Halifax Direct	

66. There were also local changes that affected operational relationships. Key staff changed in five of the original six employer organisations. We needed to invest time and effort in bringing new contacts up to speed and in warming them up to the project. Where staff were new in post their immediate concerns were naturally tuned in to their employer's business.

Mentoring

67. Another employer issue impacted on the project contract targets. We contracted to deliver mentor training to employer partners' staff and to offer accreditation for mentoring. Initial conversations with employer partners showed that take up was unlikely. Staff identified as possible mentors had been chosen because of their experience in mentoring. They also advised us that when we extended the project to SMEs, their staff would not have time to commit to training and accreditation.

68. Acting on the employers' advice we decided not to tackle the issue but to divert resources to the development of the employer-recognised completion certificate.

Human and physical resources

69. Local issues affecting project progress involved project staffing and location. The Project Officer was appointed on secondment. The demands of the substantive post had substantial effect for the first three months of the project and lesser effect for the rest of the first year.

70. The first appointment of an Employer Liaison Officer was also subject to delay in release to secondment. The appointee gave notice within two weeks. Significant delays occurred in setting the selection and recruitment process in motion due to LMU's mandatory Vacancy and Review procedures. We did not have a completely effective Employer Liaison function until June 1999. In the interim period the Project Officer undertook liaison duties and this limited the time available for other project functions.

71. The team also lost its administrative assistant during the project's life and had to re-appoint to that post.

72. The project was relocated twice during its term. Once moving to an adjacent room and once to a separate campus, three miles away. Considerable uncertainty was associated with the second move and this affected both progress and morale. The move also impinged on relationships and operations with the student body and with the LMU Job Shop (now located three miles away from the project office).

73. Significant non-budgeted costs were incurred in both advertising posts and re-printing stationery and publicity materials due to the unexpected changes in staffing and location.

Summary

74. The Working for Skills project team comprised three full time staff and a 0.3 FTE Project Manager. A Steering Committee and an employer consultative group supplemented management. Responsive modifications were made to a six-phase plan as we learned from the issues presenting themselves.

Summary of learning points

75. See the later section, Reflection on learning points, for a discussion of the main learning points.

- The Academic Year life cycle forms a poor fit with the recruitment cycles of service sector businesses.
- Employers can support job swap schemes for vacation periods. Student employment services might follow their lead by arranging job swap schemes on a nation-wide basis.
- The majority of (LMU) students already have some work experience.
- There is a greater picture of stability around student employment than is commonly supposed.
- Students are economical with their effort and their degree comes first.
- Students want their Work Experience accredited, or otherwise recognised, but as part of their degree programme and not involving extra effort.
- Some students can be "turned off" to work experience and reflective practice before they arrive at university.
- Students entering university at age 18 or 19 may not be mature enough to reflect effectively on work experience and employability skills.
- Working for Skills is readily adaptable for use with under-employed and un-employed graduates and reflection may come more readily at this stage.
- There are many competing pressures on student time. Early promotion of employability skills can attract their attention prior to entry.
- If we are to engage the hearts and minds of undergraduates to the personal development agenda then it must appear as a consistent thread running throughout the academic programme, commencing no later than the second semester of their first year.
- Where students are unwilling or unable to undergo accreditation for work experience it is important to secure the work and give them the experience they need. They will absorb some lessons through the experience even if they do not engage actively with learning materials.
- There is a progression of employment, as students increasingly need to minimise hours of work and, at the same time, increase their income.
- Employer involvement can be maintained by minimising the time required from them. And by using that time effectively in a joint forum.
- Even "low grade" part-time employment offers comprehensive in-house training.
- Our business is not the employer's first concern - especially in periods of organisational uncertainty.
- It is unwise to rely upon a small number of large employers to provide the majority of vacancies. It is more prudent to engage many employers and reduce the element of risk.
- Never underestimate the amount of time and effort needed to brief employer representatives coming in to a project late.

- And don't assume successive staff will be as committed to your plans and ideals as the previous post holder was.
- Employers don't keep the data we need. They don't need it!
- Some course structures prevent students from taking advantage of schemes like Working for Skills.
- Projects need to be responsive to change and not hidebound by plans.
- Projects are sensitive to the effects of staffing changes.

Project outputs

- ***Learning resources for students***
- ***Learning resources for mentors***
- ***Dissemination and publicity***
- ***Reports***
- ***Internet resources***
- ***Accreditation schemes***
- ***Conference presentations***
- ***Student and employer statistics***
- ***Staff training***

Printed resources

76. Five **student learning resources** have been published:

- *"Strategies for part-time Work"*.
- *"Identifying the GAP"*, Student Workfile Book 1: *"Introduction"*
- *"Identifying the GAP"*, Student Workfile Book 2: *"Learning and reflecting"*
- *"Identifying the GAP"*, Student Workfile Book 3: *"Workfile"*
- *"Identifying the GAP"*, Student Workfile Book 4: *"Entering the graduate jobs market"*

77. The first book, *"Strategies for part-time work"* was aimed at students looking for their first part-time job. We now think it has additional application with students seeking placements as part of their degree studies. *"Strategies for part-time work"* will be widely distributed at LMU, through the Job Shop and Career Development Services.

78. To support students' use of the workfile in their workplace the project has developed two **resources for mentors** in the workplace:

- A Best Practice Guide, *"Mentoring for Skills: Developing People"*
- An introduction to mentoring, *"Mentoring for Skills: Developing Mentor Skills"*

79. All learning resources are available for download (as Adobe Acrobat™ .pdf files) from the Working for Skills web site at http://www.lmu.ac.uk.acr/wfs/site/resources.htm

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80. Three **newsletters** have been produced through the life of the project and a fourth newsletter will provide summaries of this report, targeted at Student, Employer and Academic communities. All newsletters are available on-line from the Working for Skills website at http://www.lmu.ac.uk/acr/wfs/newsletter/newsletters.htm

81. A **logo and image** have been developed in order to "brand" the project. A variety of promotional and informational materials have been produced, including leaflets and posters, which incorporate the branding.

82. A **report on accreditation options**, written by our accreditation sub-contractors, The School of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

83. A **report on student part-time working patterns** (1999) giving the results of our research survey of the LMU student population. See the appendix Student part-time working survey 1999 for further details.

84. **Reports on student evaluation** of the learning resources.

85. **This report** is also an outcome of the project.

Electronic resources

86. The Internet has been used throughout the life of the project to support delivery of both project information and learning resources:

- a web site (http: //www.lmu.ac.uk/acr/wfs/index.htm)
- a web-based conferencing system (at http://www.nicenet.org/ see http://www.lmu.ac.uk/acr/wfs/site/webconf.htm for details)
- the Mailbase list "work-experience-in-he"

87. The web site is "streamed" to meet the needs of the three individual audiences, Student, Employer, and Academic. There is also an extensive "generic" area with links to:

- the web conference;
- "*The GAP*" conference proceedings;
- electronic file copy of all the printed resources;
- electronic file copy of conference presentations; and
- news items, etc.

88. The web-based conferencing facility offers the means to support peer discussion of Work-based learning issues and also to deliver group and individual support to students working with the workfile.

89. Working for Skills took on management of the Mailbase discussion list, *"work-experience-in-he"*, originally set up by the UCLAN project, *Learning Through Work*. Management of the list will remain with LMU for the foreseeable future. We hope that it will offer a forum for interested parties to follow progress in the field and that theme network members will report on continuation activities.

Accreditation schemes

90. A module skeleton, the *Work-based Learning Module* (WBL), has been developed at Levels 1, 2 and 3. The module is rated at 15 credit points and is outcome based. The skills developed are mapped to the set used in the Working for Skills workfile. The module is modelled on the highly successful *Industry Based Learning* (IBL) module running in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at LMU.

91. A value-added, short course (SCAS), qualification, the *Vocational Certificate in Professional and Personal Skills* has been developed and piloted with students undertaking work placements. The SCAS offers 45 credit points at Level 1 and can be readily adapted for use with students and graduates at all levels.

92. A non-credit bearing *Certificate of Completion* has been developed in conjunction with Halifax Direct and other employer partners. The certificate is aimed at students who do not wish to take on an additional accreditation load and are using Working for Skills materials in a mentored situation. Assessment is based on completion of the *"Identifying the GAP"* workfile and production of a CV skill profile entry. Full details of the certificate are available in the documents *"Completion Certificate"* (complete.doc) and *"Mentoring for Skills"* (bpguide.doc) available from the Working for Skills web site resources download page.

"The GAP" conference

93. The project team organised and hosted a small, half-day, regional dissemination event on April 18, 2000. The conference was held at LMU and attracted an audience of about 50 people. It offered workshops on a range of topics from practitioners in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The conference yielded good feedback and was generally thought to be a worthwhile event.

Conference presentations

94. Project staff attended conferences to disseminate information about the project:

- ASET, Warwick, 1999, 1 workshop
- University of Leeds, 1999; 1 joint presentation
- Dearing at Work, Aston, March 2000; 2 workshops (multiple presentations)
- HERD Job Shop Project, University of Huddersfield, March 2000; 1 joint presentation
- "The GAP", Working for Skills dissemination event, LMU, April 2000; team members gave 3 workshops.
- NERT session with regional careers advisors in HE, University of Sheffield.

95. Over 300 delegates attended our presentations and Microsoft PowerPoint™ slides from some of the presentations have been made available for wider viewing via our web site. (see http://www.lmu.ac.uk/acr/wfs/site/presentations.htm)

Miscellaneous resources

96. Two notice boards have been purchased to promote Working for Skills. One notice board has been erected at each of the main LMU campus sites and both occupy "prime sites". These notice boards are a permanent feature and will remain in place to host materials related to Work Experience, Careers, and the LMU Job Shop.

Students

- 590 LMU students registered with the Working for Skills Office
- at least 100 LMU students offered new part-time work through Working for Skills.
- 50 LMU students using/used the Working for Skills workfile.
- 120+ LMU students registered on SCAS developed for Working for Skills (placements)
- nil LMU students registered on external accreditation schemes
- nil LMU students undertaking Work-based Learning Module.

97. We have analysed the student registrations in a variety of ways and the results are in the appendix, Analysis of student registrations

Employers

- 7 Employer organisations involved in Working for Skills as full partners
- 10 Employer organisations involved in Working for Skills at other levels:

  GE Capital

  AON

  Wm Hill

  WS Atkins

  The Marriott Hotel,

  Hilton National hotels

  Principal Hotels

  Northern Spirit

  Harvey Nichols

  The Royal Armouries

  plus a number of small café bars and bars
- 20+ Employer organisations employing students registered with Working for Skills

Staff

98. Project staff attended a number of conferences, courses and staff training events throughout the life of the project:

Training	*Plain English Campaign; Plain English course -1 day event*	1 attended
	LMU Induction	5 attended
	Minuting Meetings	2 attended
	Train the Trainer	1 attended
Courses	*RSA II*	1 attended
	MA Mentoring	1 attended
	European Computer Driving Licence	3 attended
	Staff Development Unit, Harrogate College of FE, NVQ D32, D33 (Assessor Awards)	1 attended
Conferences	*ASET conference, Warwick 1999*	3 attended
	University of Leeds Careers Conference 1999	2 attended
	1st International conference on Work Experience, Leeds, 1999	1 attended
	Dearing at Work, Aston, 2000	5 attended
	LMU Careers Advisors Day	1 attended

Summary

99. Workings for Skills' outputs include a range of learning materials for both students and mentors in the workplace. A series of reports have been produced and a range of dissemination and publicity materials is also available.

Evaluation: Outputs and Outcomes

- ***Statistics***
- ***Client feedback***
- ***Peer review***

Project statistics

Project Aim: *develop and deliver a model of work experience which would be capable of providing large scale workplace learning opportunities to Higher Education students.*

100. Working for Skills has developed and delivered a model which has allowed at least 100 students to be offered a high quality part-time job. Mentoring support agreements have been reached with large employers and mentoring made available through the Working for Skills office for other students. Learning materials to support students seeking work, and those in work, have been developed. Accreditation models have also been developed. The model, as designed, remains untested due to our inability to persuade students to take on the learning in addition to their degree studies. We know, and have discussed some of the reasons for this but would have wished to explore this further.

101. We exceeded project targets by more than 100% in registering nearly 600 students to the project. We believe that all of these have had a "valuable guided learning experience" due to our client-focused approach and many students have benefited from our advice and support in preparing CVs and applying for part-time work. We have been able to determine that at least 100 of these students have been successful in being offered part-time work with partner employers.

102. The project target to accredit at least 100 of these students for their work experience has not been met, but over 120 placement students have benefited from studying the Vocational Certificate in Personal and Professional Skills that was developed for the project.

103. The project target to accredit 25 employer staff could not be met. Our research showed that our partner employers' staff did not require this development.

Project Aim: *To transfer the model to other HE institutions.*

104. Vigorous dissemination efforts resulted in a healthy interest in Working for Skills and materials have been reviewed by at least 30 other HEIs and FEIs. We received enthusiastic response from reviewers and a number of institutions have indicated plans to incorporate at least some elements of Working for Skills. Our target was to enable at least four HEIs to benefit from the project and we regard this target as having been met.

105. The project target to enable at least 14 employers to benefit from the project has been met and exceeded due to a vigorous and pro-active approach by our Employer Liaison Officer. He has succeeded in securing opportunities for a number of students, in a variety of service sector organisations, by "opportunity spotting".

Project Aim: *To make the model available to all Higher Education students learning in Leeds.*

106. Throughout the project we have welcomed participation from all students in Leeds. We have been successful in registering students from the University of Leeds and also registered students form some of the FE colleges in the city. Numbers have been disappointing and reflect the difficulty we had in interesting the Leeds University Union in promoting our work.

Qualitative feedback from employers and students

107. Students have valued Working for Skills as a source of high quality employment and there has been a particularly good response to our one to one, client-focused approach. Our customers have particularly appreciated our responsive approach, which they have found to contrast with some other student services.

108. Typical of the unsolicited feedback we have received are the following e-mail messages:

> *"Hi Andy! I don't know if you'll remember me but I am the loud mouth you helped out at the end of last year. You sorted me out with a job at Bar Censsa if you remember. Anyway, I know this is a little late but I just wanted to say thanks!! At the first interview and meeting with the managers, they said they were after someone bubbly and enthusiastic, Apparently I fit the bill so they gave me a job!! I have been working there since it opened- about three months and it's a nice place to work. Anyway thanks again, it's really appreciated!! Cheers!!!*

> *"Hi there... its me again just to let you know how the interview went with Addeco yesterday.. After the test and stuff she said that if I get another personal referee she doesn't think it'll be a problem for her to get me a job. It's just the fact I have to give a month's notice... I'll keep you updated... thanx."*

109. One of our students, working with Marks and Spencer, had this to say to The Independent when interviewed about his part time job:

> *"Felt silly when I delivered a box of food to Menswear. Still, caused a few laughs, and mistakes are seen as part of the learning process here. Surer than ever that retailing is for me: no two days are the same; ..."*

[SOURCE: Jason Bryan in The Working Week, The Independent, 09 March 2000]

Feedback from universities

110. Representatives of several other universities have looked closely at the Working for Skills model and entered into discussions at their home institution. At the time of writing (May 2000) not all outcomes are known but workfile and other materials have been sent to 30 HE and FE institutions. The following institutions have expressed interest in partnership with Working for Skills and plan to apply at least some of the elements of the model.

- University of Sheffield
- University of York
- Sunderland University
- Paisley University

111. Sunderland University are currently adapting Working for Skills learning resources for local use. The Leeds Business School is also developing new course material, which incorporates elements of Working for Skills and Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds, is also considering applying some elements of Working for Skills to its portfolio.

112. Progress has been slow in achieving full partnership with those institutions that have shown intent. This has been due in part to local problems in securing funding for planned Work Experience development and also to staffing shortages.

Summary

113. Some project targets have not been met, others have been met and exceeded, but overall the project has met its general aims. Students have been more interested in work than in employability skills development and this is evidenced by the large number of students registering with us but not wishing to use our learning materials.

114. Working for Skills has proved to be easily transferable to other institutions and situations. The materials can be easily modified to meet differing circumstances.

115. Students have valued highly our job matching and support services, and have been quick to convey their thanks to us.

Summary of learning points

- Partnerships with employers can be established through "spotting for opportunities" in the press etc. Employers respond well to an approach offering a pool of students for recruitment purposes.
- The Working for Skills model is applicable, with "tweaking", to a range of situations, including the Further Education sector.

Evaluation: Key achievements and reflection on learning points

- ***Using established links and contacts***
- ***In-house expertise***
- ***Finding existing "friends" of the institution***
- ***Client focus***
- ***Complementing existing services***
- ***Accreditation framework***
- ***Need for a range of support for employability skills***

Key achievements

116. Working for skills has had significant achievement in a number of areas unrelated to project targets. Networks were established early in the project and our success in internal networking at LMU arose from the appointment of a Project Officer with a long employment history within the institution. The knowledge and contacts gained over a number of years working in cross-functional posts were useful in "getting things done".

117. Knowledge of internal support units was particularly important and provided the means for our successes in branding the employability concept within LMU. The same contacts and services have helped us to provide the high-quality products, marketing and publicity materials, which have all carried the same distinctive branding of Working for Skills. Using internal support services saved project funds as all services were provided for the cost of materials only. Internal networks also provided us with excellent media and external publicity opportunities.

Transferable Learning:

- Ensure some local experience when appointing project staff.
- Consider the secondment of staff internally to reduce the likelihood of premature departure.
- Internal support services minimise costs and are highly professional.

118. The project has been very successful in dissemination throughout the two years and now has an extensive contacts list of over 4,000 names and addresses. We started with a small database of existing contacts. Adding further contact lists, supplied by existing "friends", has developed the database. We made sure that only "warm" contacts were added. Many more records have been added by individual request from people who have read project publicity and dissemination material or who have attended at dissemination events.

Transferable learning:

- Use proven "warm" contacts – people and organisations that have used or contacted the university previously.

119. Our student registration database holds over 500 records. Our success in reaching students lies only partly in the quality of our promotional materials. It was one method of distribution in particular that gave us the greatest success. We targeted all incoming level 1 students by including our publicity in the joining instructions that went out to accepted applicants in August of 1999. The combination of approaching students before the confusions of the beginning of semester together with the raising of parental awareness was highly successful. We backed up this approach by attending at enrolment sessions to give further information and, as a result of our approach, over 400 students registered with us in the first weeks of term.

Transferable learning:

- Sell your messages at a time when there are fewer competing distractions.
- Get parents aware and involved.

120. We have also been successful in building relationships with the students who registered with us. We have focused on the fact that the employer liaison relationship is tri-partite. We needed to keep talking to the students as well as the employers and we built and maintained a close working relationship with the students. We have taken a supportive and advisory role and kept focus on the career development goals of the individual. The benefit of treating the students as clients has been that they have come to appreciate the service that they receive. They keep in touch and they return for help and advice. At all times we have treated each student client as an individual and responded to his or her particular needs and interests.

Transferable learning:

- Students are clients of the job-matching process and respond well to "approachability".
- Remembering to treat clients as individuals pays dividends

121. This service-based approach to targeting part-time, long-term, opportunities for career-oriented students has succeeded in providing a strong complement to the services of the LMU Job Shop. Working for Skills has also been instrumental in helping to re-position the Job Shop and its services.

122. By matching appropriate vacancies to the large choice of possible applicants in our database the project been successful in providing and maintaining a pool of potential student labour for employer partners.

Transferable learning:

- Making a friend of your student employment service is essential, especially where the service in placed in a different organisational unit.

123. Working for Skills has successfully delivered a framework for the recognition and accreditation of work experience. The framework includes module options that can be embedded in courses; a value-added qualification; identification of an external model (the City and Guilds Personal Development Award); and an employer-validated recognition award, which does not bear credit. The breadth of forms of recognition is a significant achievement and we believe that this portfolio of options caters for the full range of needs. In addition we feel that this portfolio offers options for students who are working outside the normal part-time or vacation paid-work scenario.

124. The City and Guilds Personal Development Award will offer a recognition option not only for students who are working part-time or in vacations but is ideally suited to recognition of skills development in individuals working in temporary posts, volunteering, or involved in the Students Union, clubs or societies. Placement students are benefiting from the Vocational Certificate in Professional and Personal Skills. Individuals who do not wish to undertake any formal accreditation for their experience can opt for the employer-recognised certificate of completion or simply use the Working for Skills workfile for its intrinsic value.

Transferable Learning:

- The student body is not homogenous. A range of options and a network of opportunities are required in order to support a variety of needs.

Meeting the project objectives

125. The project objectives were to establish learning materials and processes that would lead to the recognition of skills developed by student participants and by their workplace peers and supervisors. Students would be prepared for their work experience and mentoring arrangements put into place within the workplace. The development of mentors would also be supported and accreditation of mentoring skills offered.

126. Establishing learning materials: We have developed, tested and updated a range of learning materials for students to assist them in finding work and in assessing and developing their transferable skills. The materials have evoked interest among work experience practitioners but not extensively amongst LMU students.

127. Recognition of skills: We have not been successful in accrediting work experience within its two years.

128. It has not been possible, within the time limits of the project, to embed, within existing programmes at LMU, the module we have developed. A number of programme areas have shown interest in developing the module for their own use and the module will likely embed in the next annual cycle.

129. The *Vocational Certificate in Personal and Professional Skills* has been very successful in pilots with placement students but we were unsuccessful in recruiting full time students in part-time work to the pilot.

130. The external accreditation model recommended by our report on accreditation, as being the best of the available models at that time is the *City and Guilds Licentiateship*. The Licentiateship requires a significant period of work (36 weeks) after the end of level two. It is our belief that this model is best suited to placement students and we felt unable to recommend it to full time students who are working part-time in the final year of their degree. Our decision was coloured by the imminent arrival of the *City and Guilds Personal Development Award* (PDA). The PDA has been piloted with our partners at the University of Leeds and is due for full implementation in September 2000. We recommend the PDA as the best practice model for accreditation of part-time work experience where accreditation is not embedded within the curriculum.

131. We responded to advice from our employer partners and to the results of our student research by developing the non-accredited, employer-endorsed, Certificate of Completion. In the one employer organisation that has been able to offer access to students currently employed, only two students have shown an interest in registering for the scheme.

132. Mentoring arrangements: Mentoring arrangements were agreed with our initial six employer partners. All arrangements were embedded within existing organisational practices. All our partners nominated staff already experienced in mentoring and, although we developed a mentor briefing session, no training was required or delivered. We have developed two resources to support mentors in the workplace in case of need.

133. Relationships have been established with new employer partners. In some cases it has been possible to agree mentoring within the workplace. Where mentoring has not been possible in the workplace arrangements have been made to mentor employed students from the Working for Skills office. These arrangements have been supported by formal mentor education (see Outputs – staff training and courses).

134. Accreditation of mentoring: As mentor training has not been required by our partners, no employer staff have been accredited under the Working for Skills project.

Reflection on learning points

135. See earlier sections for individual statements of learning points.

136. Working for Skills has learnt much about students and their approach to part-time work. We know when, and where, students want to work. We know why they work. And, in the main, their reasons for working are financial. We also know that there is an overall picture of stability to their employment and that students are surprisingly loyal to their employers.

137. We have also learnt that, in general, students understand the relationship between work experience, reflection, and skills development.

138. What is interesting is that sometimes they consider themselves not to be in need of this development but it "*is useful for other students*". We have observed a tendency to believe that "Work Experience" is something that "*we did at school*" and that "Reflection" is *something "we did in our course*" and that is the end of the story. Students are not making the transition to understanding that this is a life long process and that it applies to them, personally. Perhaps individuals need to gain a measure of experience before they can begin to reflect on, and understand, its value to them.

139. Our approach of concentrating on job-matching and getting students into work is the first phase of this process and we have learnt that students perhaps need more time than we had supposed in order to gather experience before being able to reflect.

140. An important piece of learning has been that, where students do want recognition for their work experience, accreditation needs to be embedded within the degree programme. Study, work, and (necessary) social activities do not leave time or energy for additional commitments for the average student. The academic provision framework at LMU requires modules to be individually validated into programme areas within Schools. There is no central pool of modules into which students can dip for elective modules (option choices). This structure has worked against the project in implementing the WBL module and has led to the separation of the workfile and the accreditation structures. The project needed to supply a means for the student to learn where they either did not wish to aim for accreditation, or could not cope with an additional accreditation load.

141. This conflict of workload versus the desire for development of skills also led us to understand that any learning materials need to be small in size. Bite sized pieces of learning are what is required. Something that can be picked up and readily digested, in odd spare moments, by individuals under severe time constraints. We need to remember that some students are working over 20 hours a week, despite the recommended maximum 15 hours.

142. We received positive feedback from focus group trials when we broke the original workfile down into four booklets. The separation of the sections answered both the comments about its physical size and the daunting nature of its large content. In practise however few students have been tempted to work with the material even after its re-presentation. The conclusion from this is that the material is still too dense. We have also come to believe that it lacks clarity and rigour. A smaller set of skills for development, presented in a more concise format, would have been more suitable for LMU students.

143. The further learning point gained from this piece of reflection is that it may have been better to have established an academic role within the project team. An academic team member could have enabled the project to be as responsive and flexible with the learning materials as it has been with students' job-seeking needs, and with employers' recruitment requirements. Some students have told us that they would prefer a more academic tone and appearance to the learning materials. An in-house academic role might have produced material, in a familiar format, that the students would recognise as being a learning text.

144. Working for Skills has learnt a great deal from its relationships with the employers too. Much of this has been to do with timing. The recruitment cycle conflicts with the academic year. And academic wheels grind slowly while employers need fast and responsive results. The key message here is responsiveness. The employer's need is now. Few businesses can wait to fill immediate vacancies with e.g. students who are involved in examinations for several weeks. Even at a macro level, individual students pinpointed for particular vacancies may be difficult to reach if they are off campus for several days. It is not surprising if some recruiters gain an impression that "students cannot be bothered". So both matching services and students need to be alert and responsive to employers' needs.

145. One surprising finding emerges from our relationships with employers. We had entirely underestimated the degree of commitment given to part-time staff. We have found that, without exception, our employer partners offer excellent in-house training schemes and supportive mentor-type relationships. Typical of these schemes are those that extend over a period of weeks and months rather than the few days' induction we might have expected.

146. Training materials we have looked at are not confined to task-specific training but also address transferable skills issues. Students working as part-time staff in these organisations are encouraged to build part-time careers and can progress to responsible roles as team leaders and assistant managers. In some organisations active encouragement is given to self-learners to carry on their own development after formal training periods finish.

147. Perhaps the single most important piece of learning gained by the project is that employers' participation levels are unpredictable over an extended period. Although our partners' commitment to this project could not be in any way doubted, and their energies were given extensively, business matters come first. Our concerns are not their concerns.

148. During the course of the project all of the employer partner organisations suffered the effects of major changes such as re-location of business, take-overs, and downturn in trading figures. Such changes cause an organisation to turn inward for a period and to take stock. Both individuals and whole organisations suffer from uncertainty in these situations and working with Higher Education becomes less of a priority.

149. In most of our partner organisations our key contacts changed due to staff movements. It may have been unrealistic of us to expect contacts to remain the same. Or to expect that new contacts would share the ideas and ideals of previous post holders. A contingency plan to meet such situations would have been useful in coping with providing the resources needed to bring new contacts on board.

150. The distinctive feature of the project was its employer-led approach. Partnerships were good and relationships were strong. We had indications that vacancies could be supplied at levels far beyond our target figure of 250. But when vacancies were supplied we could not fill them at a time when students were not seeking work. Later vacancies did not materialise for a variety of reasons.

151. In the latter days the project focused its activities on opportunity spotting. Extending our range of employer contacts and offering a pool of (targeted) student recruits in timely response to vacancy opportunities. This practice has yielded successful results and the project might have achieved much greater placement figures had the project taken an opportunity-led approach from the outset. We needed good employer contacts but concentrating on an employer-led methodology has not been successful for us. We would not assume that this would necessarily be the case with further initiatives but would be hesitant about investing all our hopes in a small group of employers.

Summary

152. The key achievements of Working for Skills have included the branding of skills development at LMU, creating a student "client culture", developing dissemination networks and systems, identifying the right time to raise skills development issues with students, and the development of a new form of recognition for part-time work experience.

153. Meeting our objectives and targets proved more difficult than we expected and numerical targets on accreditation were particularly badly affected for a number of reasons.

154. Learning points achieved through the Working for Skills project group into the categories:

- learning about students and their work patterns;
- learning about students and the development and accreditation of transferable skills;
- learning about the nature and development of written learning materials;
- learning about employers and their relationships with HEIs; and
- learning about employers' commitment to part-time staff, their training, and career development.

155. We have some remaining concerns from these learning points that relate to the need to embed accreditation of transferable skills, and the negative image of "work experience" and the need to re-badge the concept for HE use.

Dissemination and continuation strategies

- ***Dissemination vehicles***
- ***The Office for Leeds and Yorkshire***
- ***Job Shop expansion***
- ***Potential of Working for Skills***
- ***Demand for part-time employment***
- ***Embedding accreditation***
- ***Early engagement with students***
- ***Branding and image***
- ***Learning materials***
- ***Extensibility***
- ***Timing***
- ***Training and support***
- ***Differing requirements***

Dissemination

156. The main vehicles for dissemination of the project experiences and outcomes will be:

- the project web site at http://www.lmu.ac.uk/acr/wfs/index.htm; and
- this report; together with
- 4,000 executive summaries.

157. The executive summaries will be a single fold leaflet produced in the style of the earlier newsletters. They will contain the main outcomes and learning points and there will be a page aimed at each of our audiences: the student, the employer, and the academic.

158. Working for Skills has an extensive contact list of over 4000 names and each will receive a copy of the final "newsletter". Full reports will be circulated according to contract and will also be sent to project and network partners and to managers and practitioners at LMU.

159. Details of how to obtain publications will be posted to appropriate Mailbase discussion lists and Adobe Acrobat™ .pdf versions will be available for download from our web site.

Continuation

160. The creation of competitive and employable graduates is the first priority of Leeds Metropolitan University and there is a university-wide commitment to this priority, driven from the top of the organisation. In addition, the newly established Office for Leeds and Yorkshire is focusing its activities on developing employer relationships in the Region. Embedding and continuation of Working for Skills methods and learning are assured.

161. The LMU Job Shop has now been moved to the management of the Career Development Service, within the Office for Leeds and Yorkshire, and will provide the vehicle for delivery. All students newly registered with the Job Shop will be offered the Working for Skills booklet "*Strategies for part-time work*" and students who already have work will be offered the Working for Skills workfile "*Identifying the GAP*".

162. Expansion of Job Shop activities is planned. A further two offices will ensure a presence on all three campuses and increased activity with external employers will provide income generation to support this expansion. It is likely that the Job Shop will have a presence in the new and prestigious LMU gateway building, due for opening in September 2000.

163. The Working for Skills branding will be kept and will provide a university-wide image for employability activities. The noticeboards purchased by the project will continue to provide a home for materials for both the Careers Service and the Job Shop to promote the concept of employability.

164. The project will disseminate its methods to Job Shop staff and embed the Working for Skills approach of pro-activity, responsiveness, and customer care. New Job Shop publicity material will be produced in conjunction with the project to sell Working for Skills concepts and messages to Job Shop clients.

165. We plan to continue the strategy of marketing to pre-entrants and Year 1 students to promote both Working for Skills and the LMU Job Shop opportunities offered to students. The learning resources will also be promoted in LMU Schools through Career Development Services activities.

166. Existing employer relationships will be maintained and new ones developed. The Job Shop will hold supplies of the Mentor resources developed by Working for Skills and will make these available to employers on request.

167. Accreditation, in the form of the short course in Personal and Professional Skills is embedded within the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management and funds have been set aside to trial the City and Guilds Personal Development Award with students when the award is made available in September 2000. There are plans to develop the short course for use with under-employed graduates.

168. Continued efforts will be made through the offices of the Employability and Career Development Adviser to encourage the incorporation of the work based learning module into programmes across the university.

169. During the last two weeks of the project life we will be holding an internal continuation seminar to disseminate our experiences, findings, and continuation methods and strategies to a University-wide audience. All details of continuation and embedding will be incorporated into the Working for Skills web site, which is to be kept alive for at least the following 12 months.

Conclusions and recommendations

170. The core concept of Working for Skills has enormous potential. In the absence of large-scale work placement opportunities, student part-time employment must be regarded as the best source of exposure to the working environment and the development of employability skills. The idea of a mutually beneficial partnership with employers works but it is essential that many employers are engaged in order to ensure a steady flow and variety of vacancies. Student employment services can help to increase this engagement by taking an opportunistic and pro-active approach to vacancy seeking.

A - Demand for part-time employment:

171. We have established that there is a high demand for student employment in Leeds. More than 50% of our students are working part time and a further 27% were seeking work at the time that we surveyed them. The service sector economy is booming and part-time jobs proliferate. Student employment services can therefore play an important brokerage role between the student and the employer and it is at this stage that students can be introduced or reminded of the potential of part time employment for learning as well as earning.

B - Embedding accreditation:

172. Students will respond positively to the accreditation of work experience if it is embedded in the curriculum. Extra-curricular study is unlikely to attract in the same way. There remains a body of students who are unable or unwilling to take on the load of formal accreditation in addition to degree study and part-time work. To encourage these students to reflect upon and develop their skills some form of recognition of their efforts is needed. This recognition needs to impose significantly fewer loads on the individual than formal accreditation.

C - Early engagement:

173. Students are easier to reach when they are not distracted by the conflicting priorities of the beginning of session. Contacting pre-entry students was a strategy that paid off by engaging not only their attention but also the attention of their parents. Contacting pre-entry students at schools and colleges careers events may provide further success in attracting student attention.

D - Branding and image:

174. Skills development work needs a new identity. Work Experience is a term that has been over-used and that, for many people, has particular connotations. Both employers and students have indicated to us that the term "Work Experience" has an inhibiting effect for them.

175. Overall, we believe that there is a problem of individual students not understanding that personal skills development is a lifelong process and it applies directly to them. They appreciate its value but feel it more suited to other people, and in many cases have a belief that one exposure to these ideas is sufficient. We suspect that many young undergraduate students may lack the maturity to be effective reflectors.

E - Learning materials:

176. Where students' attention can be gained, it needs to be held. Learning materials must be tightly written and cohesive. Students also appreciate a product that appears "academic".

F - Extensibility:

177. A further conclusion is that Working for Skills is extensible and can be applied to a wider set of cases than the undergraduate part-time worker. It may, in fact, be more applicable to recent graduates, particularly those who consider themselves to be under-employed. We also think that Working for Skills can be used for Level 1 students in preparation for placement.

G - Timing:

178. We have found that there is a mismatch of the service sector recruitment cycle and the student's academic year responsibilities. Our conclusion is that employers need to plan well ahead and manage the process of recruiting from the student population. Student employment services can assist the employer by making a pro-active approach.

H - Training and support:

179. Student employment in the service sector has the potential to provide a high-quality learning experience. Our employer partners are no less committed to learning and development in their part-time staff than their full-time, permanent staff. We conclude from our experience that, when students are working with such employers, skills development work may be largely undertaken "on the job".

I - Differing requirements:

180. As we have noted elsewhere in this report, the student body is not homogenous. Increasing numbers of students do not fit the 18/19-year-old A-level entry pattern. And there are a variety of course types ranging from the highly vocational and professionally proscribed course to the entirely non-vocational humanities type course. Many students on courses across the spectrum will come to the university with a degree of work experience of some kind. We conclude that no single employability skills programme or approach could serve the needs of any university's total student body.

Recommendations

181. In support of these conclusions we offer the following set of recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

Student employment services such as the LMU Job Shop should support student job hunters by actively seeking out external vacancy opportunities.

Recommendation 2:

Nationally, Student Employment Services can help students by establishing a job-swap scheme for vacation periods.

A - Demand for part-time employment

Recommendation 3:

Students should be assisted in the job seeking process by provision of a suitable guide such as "*Strategies for part-time work*" which may be best embedded into the first weeks of a work-based learning module.

B - Embedding accreditation

Recommendation 4:

For those students who do need work experience, and wish for the opportunity to have that experience accredited, we recommend that the best way to offer structured work experience be through the provision of a work experience module. The module should be available to all students, whose programme is not defined by an external body, as an elective (option) to make up their degree profile. We believe that this model should support both students who already have a job and those who are seeking work.

Recommendation 5:

This module should be available at all levels of undergraduate study and students should have the option to take it at any level, without prerequisite, or to progress through all levels if they so wish.

Recommendation 6:

Student employment services should play a more active part in employability skills development by engaging in the delivery of related activities within any work based learning module.

Recommendation 7:

Where programmes are defined by an external body the City & Guilds Personal Development Award will offer a route for students wishing to take on a workload outside their degree programme. We recommend the PDA as a flexible award, which is applicable to students undertaking voluntary work, "temping", or student committee and club roles etc. The award requires only small amounts of academic staff input. It is also a low-cost award.

C - Early engagement

Recommendation 8:

Employability skills workers should develop early links (pre-entry) with prospective student clients and engage the support of parents and careers advisors. Following up the early contact by being present at cohort-based events at the beginning of session is highly recommended.

D - Branding and image

Recommendation 9:

A new image and a new name need to be researched and adopted to brand personal skills development through work experience. This initiative should be at a national level.

Recommendation 10:

Promotion and education measures to engage the hearts and minds of undergraduates are needed in order to maintain a consistent message from no later than the second semester of year 1.

Recommendation 11:

To support the above recommendation, research is needed to discover why undergraduate students do not appear to be able to relate ideas of transferable skills development to their own needs or to be ready to translate the ideas into practice.

Recommendation 12:

The potential of the employer-recognised certificate of completion needs to be further explored, linking it to a resource like the Working for Skills workfile, "*Identifying the GAP*", and branding the concept of employability.

E - Learning materials

Recommendation 13:

Learning resources need to sell themselves. We recommend that the Working for Skills workfile should be further developed to achieve a tighter format and to address a smaller set of transferable skills.

Attention should be given to selling the concept of self-development and to showing its relevance to individuals.

Consideration should be given to connecting material to the personal development aspect of Progress Files.

F - Extensibility

Recommendation 14:

LMU should build on Working for Skills in order to implement a graduate development programme for under employed and unemployed graduates.

G - Timing

Recommendation 15:

Employers wishing to recruit students to their part-time work force need to be aware of the shape and nature of the student's academic year. Planning and managing the process will pay dividends if recruitment drives are conducted well in advance of planned needs.

H - Training and Support

Recommendation 16:

We recommend that further research be done to investigate the nature, length and content of in-house training programmes for part-time staff. This research should report on the feasibility and desirability of HEIs locking in to local employer training schemes as a vehicle to deliver employability skills development to students via the workplace.

I - Differing requirements

Recommendation 17:

HEIs should consider offering a supporting framework for employability skills development, including a range of facilities, resources and study options for the student to mix and match to suit their own needs. This may be supplemented by a responsive student employment service offering a recruitment service for local employers in order to maintain a pool of employment opportunities for those students who need them (see recommendation 1).

Appendices

1. The Working for Skills team

Project Manager	Phil Marsland
Project Officer	Elizabeth Bibby
Employer Liaison Officer	Andy Jones
Administrator	Kate Hanway/ Gideon Maybury
External Evaluator	Dr Peter Hawkins
Accreditation	Rai Shacklock
Learning Resources	Lloyd Davies
	Janice Forder

2. Steering Committee members

Elizabeth	Bibby	Working for Skills
Val	Butcher	University of Leeds Careers Service
Owen	Fernandez	DfEE
Peter	Hawkins	Graduates into Employment Unit
Philip	Horn	ASDA Stores (Chair)
Andy	Jones	Working for Skills
Neal	Jones	Allied Domecq Retailing Ltd (Succeeded by Andy Jones)
Norah	Keany	The Leeds TEC Ltd
Phil	Marsland	Working for Skills
Trevor	Nuttall	The Leeds Financial Services Initiative
David	Pierce	DfEE (Succeeded by Owen Fernandez)
Rai	Shacklock	School of Tourism & Hospitality Management, LMU
Mark	Southwell	LMU Student Union
Liz	Wilson	Leeds Business School, LMU

3. Employer Consultative Group (ECG) members

Chris	Allcock	Adecco Alfred Marks
Kathryn	Allen	ASDA Stores
Elizabeth	Bibby	LMU (Chair)
Stuart	Bowker	Allied Domecq Inns Ltd
Julie	Finnigan	Ventura (succeeded by Jo Sweeting)
Janet	Gregson	Marks and Spencer Plc (succeeded by Carole Harker)
Carmen	Gutierrez	Halifax Direct
Carole	Harker	Marks and Spencer Plc
Philip	Horn	ASDA Stores (Succeeded by Kathryn Allen)
Clare	Jackson	Bass Leisure Retail
Andy	Jones	Project Employer Liaison, LMU
Neal	Jones	Allied Domecq Retailing Ltd (succeeded by Stuart Bowker)
Phil	Marsland	Project Manager, LMU
Robin	Richards	Halifax Direct
Jo	Sweeting	Ventura
Sheila	Whiteman	William Hill

4. Employer Partner Involvement

(empinv2.doc)

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Participation by employer organisations in the Working for Skills project is undertaken on a partnership basis.

1.1.2. No fees are involved in either direction.

1.1.3. The Leeds Metropolitan University Working for Skills Project will attempt to match undergraduate students seeking part-time employment to vacancies supplied by employer organisations through the agency of the Leeds Metropolitan University Job Shop.

1.1.4. At no time are employer partners required or expected to create vacancies artificially.

1.1.5. Normal recruitment and selection processes will not be affected by the provision of a further source of potential recruits from the Working for Skills project.

1.2. Benefits for Employer Partners

1.3.1. It is believed that participation in the project will confer a number of benefits to employer partners. Included amongst these are:

- The provision of a recruitment agency service at no extra cost.
- Development of a local pool of flexible skilled labour.
- Focused and motivated part-time or vacation staff.
- Participation in the development of learning materials that meet your business needs.
- Learning is business and employer led.
- Opportunity to apply project learning resources and learning techniques to staff development
- Availability of University training and accreditation for permanent staff which could be credited toward degree level study
- Opportunity to assess the capabilities and suitability of future full time graduate or non graduate recruits.
- Opportunities to develop supervisory staff.
- National publicity associated with a leading edge high profile government funded project.

1.3. Employer responsibilities

1.3.1. Employer partners are invited, and to some extent expected, to participate fully in the opportunities offered for involvement in the project.

1.3.2. The opportunities offered to employer partners for participation include the following (there may be others):

1.3.3. Participation in 3 or 4 Employer Consultation Group Meetings each project year.

1.3.4. One group member (presently N Jones of Allied Domecq Retailing) will agree to sit on the Steering Group which will involve a further 3 meetings.

1.3.5. Provision of a number of employment opportunities for students participating in the project pilot to assist in meeting the project objective of registering 250/300 students throughout the life of the project.

1.3.6. To advise the Project Officer of your skill development opportunities and needs regarding the roles that students typically occupy.

1.3.7. Agreement to be reached upon promotional, referral, selection, and student preparatory arrangements.

1.3.8. Participation in the piloting of the three learning resources.

1.3.9. Participation in the evaluation of the three learning resources.

1.3.10. Release of a small number of supervisors to undertake mentoring training for up to four half days.

1.3.11. Participate in the evaluation of the scheme through Consul tive Group Meetings and possible contact with the External Evaluator.

1.3.12. Voluntary extension of learning and accreditation opportunities to permanent staff

1.3.13. Opportunity to extend the scheme to other parts of the organisation

1.3.14. Involvement in employer dissemination seminar.

1.3.15. Opportunity to mentor/champion the scheme to smaller employer(s)

1.3.16. Participation in the final evaluation and project continuation.

5. Employer visits

(employer visits.doc) Proforma for first employer interviews

Company	**Date**
First Contact	**Address**
Telephone **Fax**	**E-mail**
Second Contact	**Address**
Telephone **Fax**	**E-mail**
E-mail documents as attachments?	**Format and encoding types**

Patterns of recruitment – Part Time workers			
Recruitment cycle			
Numbers recruited		**Location of posts**	
Duration of employment		**Hours weekly**	
Typical posts		**Rates of Pay**	
Usual recruitment processes for part time workers.			
Will WfS fit easily into usual processes?			
Are recruitment needs likely to change over the next 2 years?			
WfS Placements			
Recruitment start date		**Numbers (Part Time)**	
Commitment required from student placements (in weeks and hours)			
Vacation vacancies?			
Induction			
Induct in-house? Or through LMU WfS induction?			
Present induction arrangements			
Required preparation for students placed.			

Mentoring			
Ability to release supervisors for mentoring			
Existing mentoring arrangements in place?			
Number of supervisors to be involved in WfS arrangements			
Involve all in WfS training? Or cascade in-house?			
Requirements			
Rôles to be filled			
Skills Acquisition			
What skills can be developed through these rôles?			
Current Employees			
Number of undergraduate students currently employed part time in the organisation.		Number of those employees known to be LMU undergrads.	
Documentation			
Skills Profile/Competency Framework Other		Job Description(s)	
Dissemination			
Prospects for dissemination to other parts of the organisation?			
Ability to act as champion in disseminating to other organisations?			
Organisation to be named in WfS publicity?		Form of name to be used	
URLs to link to from WfS website			
Interviews etc?		Contact students placements for publicity purposes?	

WfS Development and Evaluation			
Involve in learning materials development?		**Involve in development of assessment framework?**	
Meet with evaluation consultant?			
Graduate Recruitment			
Posts		Numbers	
What Process(es) used?			
Qualities sought in graduate recruits			
Miscellaneous			
Your view on the circulated materials as seen within the context of your own skills profile/competency framework.			
View on Service Level Agreements		Elements for inclusion	
Learning Power involvement for permanent staff?		Estimated numbers	

6. Summary of early discussions regarding employment possibilities

(summary1.doc)

	Retail	Licensed	Call Centre
Patterns of recruitment cycle	Employers differ slightly. 1 takes in 2 major intakes Summer Vacation and Xmas temps. The other has similar peaks but gears up earlier for them (post Easter and Sep/October). One employer recruits to "hundreds" pa (the other unspecified)	Recruitment continuous and ongoing but with peaks for Christmas and Uni term times. Low season identified as post Christmas and late August/September. Both employers recruit in Leeds area to "hundreds"	Recruitment ongoing and continuous. Both employers recruit to growth in addition to wastage. One employer recruiting c500pa.
Location of posts	Leeds. Specified outlets.	Leeds. Specified pubs.	Leeds.

7. Student part-time working survey 1999

(ptwork.doc)

Executive Summary

Survey

A questionnaire survey was carried out on the Working for Skills target audience, second level full-time and sandwich undergraduates. Questionnaires, with a covering letter, were sent to 50% of the LMU target population.

Returns were low, despite follow up activities. 72 of the university's courses were represented in the returned sample.

Results

54% of our respondents were working part-time, term time. 57% of the remaining sample told us that they were looking for part-time work. Most students work between 10 and 20 hours a week during term time.

More female students responded than males but gender differences were observed in working patterns after allowing for the disproportionate response.

More than half of the respondents work in the retail of hospitality sectors. A surprising finding was that only 7% are employed in call centres.

The most surprising finding from the survey is that there is a far stronger pattern of stability in student employment than we expected. This is true of both sides of the equation; students stay longer in their part time jobs than had been supposed, and employers offer longer term or permanent contracts despite our fears that student contracts were very much of a casual nature.

Student pay is also better than we expected; none of our respondents were earning under £3:00 p/h. Most were earning between £3:00 and £5:00 p/h.

A copy of the full report can be obtained from Phil Marsland, Careers and Placements Manager, Room D204, Leeds Metropolitan University, Calverley Street, LEEDS LS1 3HE Telephone 0113 283 2600

8. Analysis of student registrations

NB: All figures relate to the period since re-appointment of our Employer Liaison Officer.

(A) Registrations by month

1999		Notes
August	4	Extensive promotion campaign, direct mail, posters, leaflets, talks to students.
September	334	
October	68	
November	57	
December	12	Low number reflects Christmas vacation and WFS move to Beckett Park Campus
2000		
January	32	We have now established ourselves in the Cottage, demand has been steady.
February	29	
March	28	
April	0	Reduced capacity due to conferences and Easter
May	?	Not yet available
June	?	
July	?	
Total number of students	564	

(B) Registrations by student academic year

U/G Year 1	**330**
U/G Year 2	**104**
U/G Year 3	**75**
U/G Year 4	**18**
Postgraduate (Level M)	***10***
Graduate	***2***
Others (not specified)	***25***
Total Number of Students	**564**

(C) Registrations by campus

LMU Beckett Park Campus	290
LMU City Campus	239
LMU FE Faculty: Harrogate College	1
Leeds University	3
Trinity & All Saints	1
Other (FE or not specified)	30
Total Number of Students	564

(D) Registrations by gender*

Females	346
Males	218
Total Number of Students	564

*Our student part-time work survey showed that more females were looking for work experience.

(E) Type of work most requested

Employment sector	Nos		Employing organisations
Call-Centre	408	[1]	Halifax. Ventura, GE, William Hill and AON
Retail	220	[2]	M&S, Asda others
Bar-Work	121	[2]	Various
IT/Business Work	38	[3]	Various
Hotels	26	[2]	Metropole, Hilton, Marriott
Business/Admin	14	[3]	Various
Leisure	4	[3]	Various

Students' requests for work of a specific nature is driven by a small set of motivating factors:

[1] Motivating factor is money; these organisations pay the most.

[2] Motivating factor is previous experience; some students like the comfort zone

[3] Motivating factor is a desire to gain commercial skills or experience; these students want their work experience to have some relation to their proposed career.

9. Tips for Work Experience initiatives

Tips for working with the business community.

Be dynamic and responsive.

Businesses all have their own specific needs.

Be pro-active. Understand the dynamic nature of the local economy and use that to spot growth and create opportunities.

Target emerging needs. Engaging with the 'hot issue' of the day will bring support from intermediaries like Business Link.

Tips for working with students:

It is important to understand the student market. An early survey of current student demographics, work patterns and job-seeking status will pay dividends when developing strategies.

The market may need segmenting. Students are not homogenous and will display widely varying degrees of work experience and development in employability skills.

A client focus orientation to your methods will engage individuals and allow them to see early pay-offs from their interest.

Engage with students early. Pre-entry contact is extremely valuable as there are fewer competing interests at that stage. Additionally, any information provided is likely to elicit parental interest and support.

Support pre-entry contact by using early-session activities to continue awareness raising and to create a strong "employability message". We used enrolment (registration) sessions, freshers' fairs and cohort meetings to generate opportunities to meet students.

Combine forces. Link employability initiatives with Careers services, Student Employment Service, academic activities, and the Student Union.

Students need to be given reasons to develop employability. Develop some good Case Studies by finding real role models; but you will need to gain some early success in order to develop Case Studies in time to be useful.

Don't rely on one format for delivery. Use a variety of methods.

Tips for working with academic staff and departments:

Ideally, embed employability skills development within individual subject modules.

Where skills development cannot be embedded in subject material the next best approach is to offer a specific module as a central elective module.

Offer an external accreditation model to support students whose programmes will not accommodate a skills development module. The City and Guilds Personal Development Award is a low cost award, requiring minimal academic input and can be structured around a variety of experiential situations.

Gain support at the highest level. Secure an institutional policy recommending that all student programmes offer accreditation for placements and/or part time work experience.

Beware local structures and procedures, which may have a delaying effect. Be certain that what you hope to achieve is in fact achievable within your time scale. Understand the structures and procedures and work with them. This may require a different approach in each Faculty.

Build in ownership. Don't rely on individual enthusiastic responses from academic staff. Engage a system of academic support by establishing champions in each Faculty. Consider a working group of Faculty representatives.

Find hooks. Accelerate change by connecting with current needs: i.e. QAA and selling the benefits of employability skills development and demonstrate flexibility of approach. Be prepared to adapt both your messages and your materials for local needs in different subject areas.

Tips for maintaining student motivation:

Understand the student as client. Ask why the student is paying. What do they want from their education experience? And are they getting it?

Create a "charter" or Statement of Entitlement. Spell out both rights and responsibilities. Encourage the students to see this as a partnership from which they benefit best from an active input.

Be aware that a student working part-time and attending lectures may only have free time outside normal office hours. Be flexible in delivery methods and customise them to needs in order to support the process. If extended hours approach is not possible then offer a variety of alternative support methods via e-mail and the World Wide Web, for instance.

To keep students motivated, ensure that they see short term benefits. A one-to-one approach will keep individuals engaged. CV advice and applications screening are two methods of demonstrating short-term benefits that have worked for us.

Tips for building partnerships:

Allow plenty of time to establish relationships and networks.

Find your champions, both internal and external. Champions can be found in unexpected places. Look outside the obvious networks. Find out what services are available in your institution to deliver your services and products in the most professional and effective manner. Make a friend of media and marketing departments.

Adopt one-to-one methods wherever possible with partners and clients.

Keep regular contact. Establish two-way communication channels. Make effective use of e-mail and telephone to maintain relationships without excessive time burdens. This is particularly important with employer partners.

10. Work Experience Theme

MANAGER

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Project Manager for:

NCWE

PROJECTS Work Experience
Gradient

The projects in this theme are all seeking to take up the challenge contained in the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education to develop ways in which to increase the numbers of students being helped to become familiar with work and the numbers of employers offering work experience opportunities. Their work is being undertaken against a background of several previous initiatives aimed at exploiting the value of learning acquired through experience in the workplace and the recent report by the Centre for Research into Quality at the University of Central England, Work Experience: Expanding opportunities for undergraduates. In particular some of the projects are concerned with exploiting the learning opportunities offered by reflecting on the experience of work which students gain from their employment in part-time and vacation jobs.

There are eight projects in the theme and their activities are concerned with:-

- developing work experience brokering services between universities and employers;
- expanding opportunities and involvement in work experience within universities curricula;
- introducing work experience modules into universities modular programmes;
- developing methods to help students to reflect upon their work experience and identify learning gained;
- using work experience to develop key skills and student employability;
- focusing on students' part-time and vacation work experience as well as that more closely related to their course of study; and
- raising the profile of work experience and the numbers of students and employers involved.

All projects have commenced work and will collaborate closely through networking activities. They plan to disseminate news of progress and results to a wide audience and also to work closely with the newly established National Centre for Work Experience which is being funded for two years by the Department.

PROSPER

Joint Systems to Enhance Work Experience Levels of Service and Satisfaction (JEWELS)

This collaborative project between PROSPER (formerly Devon and Cornwall TEC) and the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth has two main aims: The first aim of the project has been to develop accreditation for independent work experience through a Work Experience Award, a Credit bearing module, and a transferable model 'Learning from Experience' which has a wide application The second part of the project is to extend the work experience opportunities for students by awareness raising with both businesses and business intermediaries (such as Business Link advisors) the value of 'Students as a Business Resource'. The project has also developed a web based job search scheme and a single point of access for businesses to access students from both HEI's.

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Hotel and Catering International Management Association (HCIMA)

Quality and Value for Students at Work

This project is to support higher education students, from any discipline, who work on a part time or casual basis in the hospitality industry during their course

The two major outcomes are firstly a comprehensive survey of 1500 students' experiences of such work, which provides valuable data to enable employers easily and economically to target this pool of labour as we as improving retention by understanding students' needs and secondly a free quality Student Pack, a self managed resource to encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt while undertaking such work. It will help them develop and demonstrate employability skills such as communication and working with others. The pack can later be used to help provide evidence of capability when seeking a career in any business or professional sector.

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Leeds Metropolitan University

Working for Skills

The project will aim to develop and deliver a transferable model of work experience which will be capable of providing large scale work place learning opportunities to higher education students. The model will use paid part time and vacation employment to develop student skills and employability. The project will also establish learning processes that will lead to the recognition of skills developed by student participants and by their work place supervisors.

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University Of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

Learning through Work

The project's aims were to move from the current small scale, disparate and departmentally based provision of work opportunities, to a University-wide system within an approved quality framework. It built upon experience gained at UCLAN and elsewhere and enables students based at the University or associate colleges to gain credit for learning from work experience through reflective practice, goal setting and problem solving as individuals and in teams. The project also helps regional employers, especially SMEs, to improve their competitiveness, to recognise the benefits of employing graduates and to work more closely with the University and its associate colleges

In particular, the project has produced a quality framework for monitoring and evaluating accredited work experience for any UCLAN or associate College student from any discipline This framework prepares Students for work experience, enhances their work readiness and develops a pool of expertise for local businesses. A consortia of small employers came together to promote undergraduate work experience to local businesses, provide joint work placement opportunities and provide employer involvement in the design of placement models and approaches. The project also developed a matching Service between students and employers.

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Learning through Earning

The broad objective of the UEA Learning through Earning Project is to improve employment prospects for our students, especially those taking non-vocational degrees. The project seeks to do this by encouraging those students who are doing any non-academic work during their time at UEA to use their analytical and reflective skills to gain more understanding of the work place, and their own personal development within it.

This is done by offering students a 20-credit 'free choice' unit - The Work-based Learning Unit based, in part, on their experience in the workplace. The unit reflects the level of learning and analysis appropriate for a level two degree programme at UEA. The Work experience may be either paid (casual or temporary work) or unpaid. Whatever the nature of the work experience undertaken by the student, the over arching objective of the unit is to develop the student's higher level capability as a self directed and reflective learner. Students are assessed on a portfolio of evidence of employability skills plus an extended essay or report.

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Final report available from end of May 2000.
Also available:

A 'developing a work experience module' leaflet with handy hints, pitfalls and issues to be considered.

University of Manchester

Work Experience Bank

The project has developed a collaborative human network and a web based Work Experience Bank to deliver high volume solutions for quality work experience. In its first year of operation The Work Experience Bank has become established as an online brokerage for all forms of undergraduate work experience at sub-regional, regional and national levels.

The Work Experience Bank grows the work experience market and makes it work more efficiently. In Manchester it has exceeded all targets:

- The WEB acts as the central focus for advertising work experience opportunities Partner agencies are more visible and students are more accessible to recruiters.
- 7000 students are registered, across the 4 Manchester/Salford universities
- Vacancies are up by 22%. 3000 vacancies advertised.
- A web-based learning log, the Skills Bank, is available online to help students track their skills development from all forms of work experience.

Norman Rea

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University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

Experience Works

The aim of the project is to expand the number of students undertaking work experience, to stimulate employers to perceive the potential of employing graduates and to enhance the quality of new and existing Work experience by establishing quality criteria and accreditation processes

The key outcomes of the project include:

1 a unique on line student registration service which allows direct mailings of work experience opportunities;

2 an extensive web site providing information on a l aspects of work experience for students, academics and employers; and

3 a work based earning module enabling students undertaking work experience to gain credit towards their degree.

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University of Wolverhampton

Improving the Quality of Work Experience in Higher Education

The project aims to provide improved access for undergraduates to accredited quality work experience opportunities integrated into the curriculum, improving key skills development and graduate employability.

The focus of the project will centre on increasing the quantity, quality and variety of work experience opportunities for undergraduate and employer participation. The project will address the challenge of developing mechanisms to provide increased work experience for undergraduates, that maximises the opportunity for skills development through the development and mainstream integration of a university accredited 'Independent Work Experience Module'. An important element of this module will be the development of an integral computer-based self-assessment tool enabling the recording and assessment of achievement and skills development.

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Council for Industry and Higher Education

A National Centre for Work Experience

NCWE was set up n 1998 with DfEE funding in response to the Dearing Report. It aims to expand work experience for the benefit of students, organisations and the economy. It works in partnership with HEIs, large and small organisations, students and others in raising awareness of the benefits of work experience and the learning outcomes. It researches, co-ordinates, and disseminates information on best practice and offers training and consultancy. It publishes good practice guides which help students get the most out of their work experience and businesses to realise the potential of employing students. It encourages HEIs to raise the academic value of work experience and to accredit it within the degree structure. It acts as a forum for discussion on work experience issues and a voice to lobby government.

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